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From the Office of the Director of Health

First Case of West Nile Virus Reported

Laboratory results confirm a 54-year-old man living in Greene County has developed West Nile virus. This is the first case reported to the Springfield-Greene County Health Department this year.

West Nile virus is a viral illness carried by birds and most often spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. It occurs seasonally in the United States.

"The symptoms of West Nile virus vary, depending on the level of infection," says administrator of community health and epidemiology Kendra Williams. "Approximately 80 percent of people who are infected will not develop any symptoms. Up to 20 percent may experience fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. These symptoms generally appear three to 14 days after being bitten by the infected mosquito and usually clear up on their own."

The best way to prevent infection with West Nile virus is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding habitat by emptying standing water.
- Change the water in pet dishes and birdbaths frequently.
- Keep lawns short and free of debris.
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent when outdoors, according to label instructions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors.
- Stay inside if at all possible around dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Make sure window screens fit tightly to keep mosquitoes out of the home.

"People who spend more time outdoors and people over 50 are more at risk for developing West Nile virus," adds Williams. "Anyone who develops symptoms should contact their health care provider."

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